
Learning difficulties: *Paul High* on Brummana High School

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Photo of ‘Our Lady of Lebanon’ by Nabih El Boustani on Unsplash

While the situation in much of the Middle East is troubling, British Friends need to have a particular concern for Lebanon. It has been almost one year since we all saw the devastating Beirut port explosion, on 4 August 2020. But it has also now been nearly two years since the Lebanese Lira went into freefall – it is now just ten per cent of its former value against the US dollar. As a result businesses are struggling to manage and unemployment is a staggering fifty per cent. Inflation means that even those with incomes face extreme difficulties purchasing essential goods and services for their families. This month’s World Bank report put the Lebanese financial crisis in the top ten, and ‘possibly top three’, most severe crises in the country since the mid-nineteenth century.

Among this devastation, Brummana High School, a Quaker educational institution for which British and Irish Quakers have had responsibility since its foundation between 1869 and 1874, still works on. It continues to ensure a holistic, value-based education for 1,250 Lebanese students. Indeed, it is within this troubled period that

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this robust school is much appreciated by so many near and far, from parents to students, and from staff to old alumni, right around the world.

The school is going on – as it has for generations – creating future leaders in business, education, government and other sectors. These children will be needed to take Lebanon forward. The school works with pupils across the different communities in the Lebanon, working to resist division. This diversity, and the school’s promotion of tolerance and peaceful resolution, have been central to its academic excellence and pastoral compassion.

The school relies on tuition fees, but families are struggling to pay right now. The shortfall this year is considerable. But our principal, David Gray, recently reminded the community that ‘We live in hope, however, and shall not give up. Lebanon is in a state of collapse; our job as educators is to provide a beacon of light and rebuild.’

Our head prefect, Kelly Kanaan, speaks of three areas in which the school has achieved in particular: ‘navigating the waters of online education... student-led activities, including BHS Model United Nations... and building international bonds and relationships with students from abroad, including a Quaker school in the UK.’

This past academic year has been extremely difficult. But despite all the challenges presented by Covid-19, which came on top of these economic and social crises, Brummana High School has nonetheless maintained its provision of a high-quality Quaker education. ●

Paul is the chair of Quaker International Educational Trust.